

Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS)

Physician FAQ

Why are physicians a good fit for EIS?

Physicians are a good fit for EIS because of their desire to improve health and make a difference, and their capacity to think quickly on their feet and work effectively under stressful circumstances. In clinical settings physicians care for one patient at a time; in EIS physicians have opportunities to effect change at the population level—improving health of a community or an entire country. Whether physicians pursue a career in public health, clinical medicine, or academia after EIS, the public health and applied epidemiology skills gained during EIS will complement and enhance clinical skills.

What do physicians do during EIS?

The EIS model is similar to medical training—learning through service. EIS officers are assigned to CDC programs, to state or local health departments, and sometimes to other organizations where they provide on-the-job service. Physician EIS officers use their clinical knowledge and experiences to diagnose outbreaks and help implement relevant control measures that are clinically sound and feasible. Physician EIS officers are able to dissect and analyze surveillance data to better understand the clinical implications of priority diseases, and are able to quickly disseminate this information to help other clinicians better manage these health problems in hospitals and clinics throughout the country and internationally.

Whether you are a specialist in infectious diseases, pediatrics, family medicine, internal medicine, emergency medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, surgery, pathology, or any other clinical discipline, EIS offers options to meet various interests, such as infectious diseases, environmental health, occupational health, global health, or injury prevention and control. When responding to domestic or international acute health events, EIS officers are learning while making a difference.

How would my clinical skills be applied during EIS?

Physicians have a strong foundation of investigational skills which are applied often during EIS. Analogous to the clinical work of making a differential diagnosis, testing a hypothesis, and initiating treatment, physician EIS officers use their clinical acumen to identify potential causes of an outbreak and how to stop it. It is similar to the processes of diagnosing and treating a patient, but on a community or population level.

How can I keep up my clinical skills during EIS?

During EIS, officers are presented with new and emerging health problems which require them to keep up-to-date knowledge of clinical sciences. As an EIS officer investigating acute public health events such as Zika virus, measles outbreaks, or lead poisoning, you will gain expertise in these clinically relevant diseases. Having sharp clinical skills is important for physicians working in public health. While there may be opportunities to do limited clinical work during the EIS fellowship, it must be balanced with EIS officers' ability to focus on the EIS objectives and to respond quickly when called for a public health emergency. The two years in EIS pass quickly and it is important for officers to capitalize on opportunities for hands-on work. Additionally, most physician EIS officers have several opportunities to present their work to other clinicians at national conferences and through peer-reviewed articles.

How will EIS enrich my career journey?

- EIS is a unique opportunity for physicians and provides a life-changing career experience. EIS officers work on meaningful health issues domestically and internationally.
- EIS provides a pathway for a wide range of careers. The analytical and critical thinking as well as the leadership skills gained during EIS can be applied in any career setting. Whether you continue a career in public health, clinical medicine, academia, or any combination of these, the experience, skills, and network of colleagues gained during EIS will prove invaluable.

What types of jobs are commonly sought by EIS physician alumni?

Many EIS graduates choose public health careers, at the local, state, or federal level, while others continue to apply their epidemiological and clinical skills in clinical or academic settings, or non-profit and other organizations. EIS alumni who stay in public health ensure that CDC and other agencies have sustainable epidemiologic expertise. Many EIS alumni become experts and leaders in their chosen fields including roles of:

- Acting Surgeons General
- CDC directors
- CDC center, division, and branch leaders
- Medical and public health school faculty and deans
- Foundation and non-governmental organization executives
- State epidemiologists
- Pharmaceutical and insurance industry executives
- Medical epidemiologists
- State health officials
- Health and medical editors, reporters, and writers

Learn more about EIS

Visit the EIS website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/eis/>

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